## *The Ruling of Purdah*

**Question:** What is the law in Islaam about women wearing the *purdah*? Did the women observe *purdah* during the time of Rasulullaah ρ and the Sahabah ψ? Is it also necessary to observe *purdah* from one's Ustaadh and *peer*? Please elaborate in the light of the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth.

**Answer:** Without doubt, it is necessary for women to observe *purdah* from all non-Mahram men (those whom she is allowed to marry). Had *purdah* not been a requirement of the Shari'ah, it would have revealed a defect in the Shari'ah because *purdah* was always a feature in the religions of all the previous Ambiyaa عليهم السلام. Not observing *purdah* is a sign of people who are deprived of the light of Nabi.

It is therefore Waajib (compulsory) to observe *purdah* in front of one's Ustaadh and *Peer*. The only exceptions from whom *purdah* need not be observed are such old people who no longer have any passions in them. *Majaalisul Abraar* states: **"The more a woman stays away from men, the safer it is for her Deen."**[1]

Who can be purer than Rasulullaah ρ? However, the women of the Sahabah τ still observed *purdah* from him (unless there was some need not to). Hadhrat Aa'isha رضي الله عنها reports that a woman once handed a letter over to Rasulullaah ρ from behind a curtain.[2] Although all women are the spiritual daughters of Rasulullaah ρ and although Allaah protected him from all evil intentions, the laws of *purdah* applied to him as well.

Rasulullaah ρ pure wives were the mothers of the Ummah, as stated in the Qur'aan, yet Allaah instructed them saying, ***"Remain in your homes and*** *(when it is absolutely necessary to leave your homes, leave properly clothed and)* ***do not make a display of yourselves as was the practice of*** *(women during)* ***the former period of ignorance"***[3]

Allaah also says, ***"O Nabi ρ! Tell your wives, your daughters and the women of the Mu'mineen that*** *(when they have to leave their homes for some necessity)* ***they should draw down their "jalaabeeb"***[4] ***over themselves." This is best for their recognition*** *(to allow people to distinguish free and honourable women from slaves who are not required to cover themselves in this fashion)* ***so that they are not harmed*** *(not teased or made fun of as was done to slave women in the time of Rasulullaah ρ).*[5] The Qur'aan therefore regards *purdah* as a sign of honourable women and not observing *purdah* as a sign of women who are bereft of honour and status.

Another verse of the Qur'aan states: ***"When you ask them (Rasulullaah ρ's wives) for anything, then ask them from behind a curtain (without seeing them). This is purer for your hearts and for their hearts (for it safeguards you from evil thoughts and desires)."***[6]

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[1] Pg.563.
[2] Abu Dawood, Nasa'ee and *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh*.
[3] Surah Ahzaab, verse 33.
[4] A loose garment that covers the entire body without revealing the shape of the body and which has only a little opening to allow the woman to see.
[5] Surah Ahzaab, verse 59.
[6] Surah Ahzaab, verse 53.

### *AHADEETH CONCERNING HIJAAB*

1. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar τ reports that Rasulullaah ρ said, "Women have no need to leave their homes except when absolutely necessary."[7]

2. Rasulullaah ρ also said, "A woman is an object of concealment, so when she leaves her home, Shaytaan ogles at her."[8] All people who look lustfully at a woman are actually Shayaateen because they act in the same way. A women should therefore never leave home without necessity.

   Although women were allowed to perform salaah in the Masjid during the time of Rasulullaah ρ, yet Rasulullaah ρ made it clear that it is better for them to perform their salaah at home.[9] In fact, the Ahadeeth tell us that towards the end of his life, Rasulullaah ρ preferred that women not come to the Masjid for salaah. As a result, some Sahabah ψ started stopping their wives from going to the Masjid.

   A Hadith states that Hadhrat Ummu Humayd رضي الله عنها the wife of Hadhrat Abu Humayd Saa'idi τ once came to Rasulullaah ρ and said, "O Rasulullaah ρ! I love to perform salaah behind you." Rasulullaah ρ then told her, "I know that you love to perform behind me, but your salaah in the innermost recess of your house is better than your salaah in your room, your salaah in your room is better than your salaah anywhere else in your house and your salaah anywhere else in your house is better than your salaah in your local Masjid. Likewise, your salaah in your local Masjid is better than your salaah in this Masjid of mine." She then had a place made for her in the innermost and darkest recess of her house and performed her salaah there until the day she passed away."[10]

   When the condition of women started to change during the time of Hadhrat Umar τ (they started using perfume in public, dressing more attractively, etc), he stopped them from attending the Masjid for salaah. The Sahabah ψ agreed with this prohibition and none of them opposed it. There were some women however, who complained about it to Hadhrat Aa'isha رضي الله عنها. Hadhrat Aa'isha رضي الله عنها was in favour of the move and said to them, "Had Rasulullaah ρ seen the condition of women (nowadays), he would have stopped them from going to the Masjid just as the women of the Bani Israa'eel were stopped."[11] **In his commentary of Bukhaari, Allaama Ayni رحمه الله mentions that Hadhrat Umar τ used to stand up in the Masjid on Fridays and throw pebbles at the women to get them out of the Masjid."**

   For this reason, jurists have stated, "It is forbidden and Makrooh for women to attend the Masjid for salaah even on Fridays, the days of Eid and for lectures. This applies to all women, even old ladies and whether it is during the nights or days. The Fatwa has been passed on this because of the evil present during these times."[12]

3. Rasulullaah ρ even instructed his wives to observe *purdah* from the blind. Hadhrat Ummu Salamah رضي الله عنها and Hadhrat Maymoona رضي الله عنها were once with

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[7] Tabraani.
[8] Tirmidhi.
[9] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.96).
[10] Ahmad, Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Hibbaan, as quoted in *Targheeb wat Tarheeb* (Vol.1 Pg.187).
[11] Bukhaari (Vol.1 Pg.120) and Muslim (Vol.1 Pg.183).
[12] *Durrul Mukhtaar* (Vol.1 Pg.529).

Rasulullaah ρ when the blind Sahabi Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Ummu Maktoom τ came there. Rasulullaah ρ instructed the two of them to observe *purdah* from him. "O Rasulullaah ρ!" Hadhrat Ummu Salamah رضي الله عنها said, "But he is blind and cannot see us." Rasulullaah ρ's reply was, "Are you two also blind that you cannot see him?"[13]

A Hadith states that a woman arrives in the form of a Shaytaan and leaves in the form of a Shaytaan. This means that just as Shaytaan whispers evil into people's hearts, so too, a woman without *purdah* causes evil thoughts to develop in a person's mind.[14]

4. Rasulullaah ρ also said, "Looking (at non-Mahram men and women) is the fornication of the eyes, hearing (them speaking) is the fornication of the ears, speaking (to them) is the fornication of the tongue and touching (them) is the fornication of the hands, walking (towards them) is the fornication of the feet, desiring (them) is the fornication of the heart and the private part either culminates the act (of fornication) or shuns it."[15] It is because of this that it is not even permissible for a woman to recite the Qur'aan loudly in salaah or to recite the Talbiya of Hajj loudly. They should also not greet non-Mahram men.

5. Rasulullaah ρ instructed his wife Hadhrat Sauda رضي الله عنها to observe *purdah* from her brother who was born of her father's slave because he resembled Utba[16].

6. When a woman's son was martyred in a battle, she came on to the battlefield to collect his body. She was wearing her veil at the time and when someone asked how come she managed to remember wearing the veil despite her grief at the loss of her son, she replied, "I may have lost my son, but I have not lost my modesty."[17]

7. Hadhrat Ummu Atiyya رضي الله عنها reports that (to show the strength and numbers of the Muslims) Rasulullaah ρ instructed them all to attend the Eid salaah even if they were menstruating or in *purdah*.[18] The women were told to wear large shawls that covered them completely and when one of them asked what were them to do if they did not have such shawls, Rasulullaah ρ replied, "Then her companion should cover her in her shawl."

Besides the above, there are numerous other Ahadeeth that make it clear that *purdah* was observed with great importance during the time of Rasulullaah ρ and the Sahabah ψ. *Ihyaa'ul Uloom* also states that the women always went out with their faces covered.[19]

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[13] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.269).
[14] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.268).
[15] Muslim (Vol.2 Pg.336) and Abu Dawood (Vol.1 Pg.299).
[16] Utba was the brother of Hadhrat Sa'd bin Abi Waqqaas τ. He died as a Mushrik but before dying, he told his brother that he had an illegitimate child from the slave girl of Zam'ah. Zam'ah was the father of Rasulullaah ρ's wife Hadhrat Sauda رضي الله عنها. However, because the slave girl remained the property of Zam'ah and the fatherhood of Utba could not be proven, the boy legally remained the child of Zam'ah and was therefore a brother to Hadhrat Sauda رضي الله عنها. Nevertheless, because the child resembled Utba, Rasulullaah ρ instructed Hadhrat Sauda رضي الله عنها to observe *purdah* from her brother because of the likelihood that he could be Utba's son. She therefore always observed *purdah* from him even though she was very much older than him.
[17] Abu Dawood (Vol.1 Pg.344).
[18] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.125).
[19] Vol.2 Pg.48.

If a woman needs to leave the house for a need (such as answering the call of nature, etc) or a requirement of the Shari'ah (Hajj, etc), she must observe the guidelines stated in the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth. These are:

1. She must lower her gazes. The Qur'aan states: ***"And tell the Mu'mineen women that they should lower their gazes and preserve their chastity."***[20]

2. She must wear a Niqaab (veil to cover the face). This is included in the verse: "***they should draw down their "jalaabeeb" over themselves."***[21] Hadhrat Aa'isha رضي الله عنها says, "When people passed in front of us (during Hajj), we would cover our faces and then open them up again after they had passed."[22]

3. She must not beautify herself. The Qur'aan says: "***do not make a display of yourselves as was the practice of*** *(women during)* ***the former period of ignorance"***[23] Haafidh Ibnul Humaam رحمه الله says, "When women go to a place where they are allowed, they can go only if they are not without *purdah* and without beautifying themselves. They should go dressed in a manner that a man does not even bother to look at them because Allaah says: "***do not make a display of yourselves as was the practice of*** *(women during)* ***the former period of ignorance".***[24]

4. She must go dressed simply and untidily. A Hadith states that women should go out dressed untidily.[25] Hadhrat Umar τ said, "Do not give women good clothes, for then they will remain at home." This he said because women never like to leave the house badly dressed.[26]

5. She must not wear any perfume or powder. Rasulullaah ρ said, "Every eye is an adulterer (by looking at non-Mahram women) and a woman is like an adulteress when she wears perfume and walks by men."[27]

   It is stated in *Majaalisul Abraar* that if a woman's husband is not at home and she has to leave the house for some necessity, she must go with *purdah*, dressed shabbily, use a quiet road that has not much traffic, avoid passing marketplaces, not use perfume, not beautify herself and not speak to anyone."[28] Hadhrat Hasan رحمه الله said, "Do you allow your women to bump into Kuffaar men in the marketplaces? May Allaah destroy those who are not protective (over their women)!"[29]

6. She must be accompanied by her husband or Mahram. Rasulullaah ρ said, "It is not permissible for the woman who believes in Allaah and the Last Day to travel for three days (88 km) without her father, son, husband, brother or any other Mahram."[30] There are Ahadeeth that limit this distance to two days, others state one day, others one night and others as little as three miles. The difference in the

[20] Surah Noor, verse 31.
[21] Surah Ahzaab, verse 59.
[22] Abu Dawood (Vol.1 Pg.261).
[23] Surah Ahzaab, verse 33.
[24] *Majaalisul Abraar* Pg.563.
[25] Abu Dawood (Vol.1 Pg.91).
[26] *Ihyaa'ul Uloom* (Vol.2 Pg.48).
[27] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.96).
[28] Pg. 568.
[29] *Ihyaa* (Vol.2 Pg.48).
[30] Muslim (Vol.1 Pg.434).

distance varies according to the degree of danger. People must be very cautious in this regard.

## PURDAH AND THE LEADER OF THE WOMEN OF JANNAH HADHRAT FAATIMA رضي الله عنها

When Hadhrat Faatima رضي الله عنها was asked what the best thing for a woman is, she replied, "That she does not see men and they do not see her." Rasulullaah ρ liked her reply very much and made du'aa for her.[31]

It was Hadhrat Faatima رضي الله عنها who initiated the practice of holding a sheet over the grave when burying a female. Before she passed away, she made the bequest that her grave be covered so that no male can even see her height or size. Such was her degree of modesty even though a dead body is wrapped in the shroud, is not something to be desired and the people at the funeral are generally overcome with fear for Allaah. What a difference between the daughter of Rasulullaah ρ and the women of today who wear sleeveless dresses, thin clothing and even saris. They walk about bare-headed with their faces exposed and flaunt their charms to all and sundry in shopping centres, fairs and cinemas. How true were the words of Rasulullaah ρ when he said, "many women will be dressed yet undressed and will therefore entice others and be prone to enticement themselves." About such women, Rasulullaah ρ said, "they will not even smell the fragrance of Jannah" let alone enter Jannah.

How well did Akbar put it when he said (in a poem which means):

*"When some women without Purdah came yesterday…*
*I asked, 'What happened to your veils?'*
*They replied, 'The veils have fallen over the minds of our men'*

It is stated in *Majaalisul Abraar*: "Women should not be walking on the streets because doing so amounts to immodesty. It is necessary for men to prevent their women from going out unless it be for one of the following seven reasons: (1,2) visiting her mother or father, (3,4) seeing her ailing mother or father, (5,6) consoling her bereaved mother or father and (7) visiting her close relatives (brother, sister, aunt, etc).

She may also go out if she is a suckling nurse or needs to bathe a corpse or to fulfil a right due to someone or receive a right due to her. This she may do with or without permission. She will not be permitted to go out under other circumstances, even to meet someone, see a sick person or attend a Waleema. In fact, if the husband permits her in these cases, they will both be sinful. The silence of the husband is also regarded as permission and because it is Fardh to prevent a wrong, his silence will amount to neglecting a Fardh. He will therefore be sinful for neglecting the Fardh duty."[32]

Haafidh Ibnul Humaam رحمه الله says, "When women go to places where they are allowed, they can go only if they are not without *purdah* and without beautifying themselves. They should go dressed in a manner that a man does not even bother to look at

[31] Bazzaar and Daar Qutni.
[32] Pg.522.

them because Allaah says: ***"do not make a display of yourselves as was the practice of*** *(women during)* ***the former period of ignorance".***[33]

In fact, the Sahabah ψ used to close all holes in their walls so that their women should not look at other men.[34] And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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[33] *Majaalisul Abraar* Pg.563.
[34] *Majaalisul Abraar* Pg.563.